

# Congressional Hearing on the Impacts of the Republican ACA Repeal Bill



## *Hearing Highlights*

Yesterday, House Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer (MD) and House Democrats held a hearing on the impacts of House Republicans' legislation to repeal the Affordable Care Act – which they refuse to hold hearings on themselves. House Republicans have passed the bill out of the House Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, and Budget Committees without having held a single hearing to discuss the impact of their bill. As the Budget Committee met to markup the bill, House Democrats convened a hearing at the same time in order to ask experts the questions the American people deserve answers to.

Over the course of two panels, House Democrats heard from three witnesses on the economic and coverage implications of the bill and five witnesses who provided patient and provider perspectives.

### **Panel One: Economic and Coverage Implications**

#### **Doug Elmendorf, Dean, Harvard Kennedy School, Former Director of the Congressional Budget Office**

“The health care legislation supported by the Republican House leadership would take our country backwards, not forward in my view.”

“[The AHCA would] entirely reverse the progress of the past several years in expanding health insurance coverage in this country.”

“If you lose eligibility for Medicaid, you are not deciding to become uninsured, you are losing your access to health insurance, and affordable health care.”

“The evidence is clear, the bill is not so much about giving people more choices, as about taking away their existing opportunities.”

#### **Andy Slavitt, Former Acting Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services**

“It's important to recognize what has been accomplished under the ACA and where the bar for progress has been set. Only a few short years in and the uninsured rate has been cut nearly in half. Over a hundred million Americans are protected from pre-existing conditions and equal numbers are protected from ‘gotcha’ insurance policies with caps and limits and uncovered services like mental health and maternity care. Whatever happens next, whatever we call it, we must measure it against the benchmark of what the ACA has accomplished.”

*Prepared by the Office of the House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer, 3/16/17*

“Kids would be hit very hard. Thanks to Congress’s work on CHIP and the ACA, the uninsured rate among children has dropped to a historic low of around 5%. The AHCA makes insurance unaffordable for many families and makes a radical cut to Medicaid. \$880 billion, or as much as 25% of the Medicaid program would be cut, and then placed under a cap.”

“Seniors would be hit tremendously hard as well, as the premium increases and tax credit reductions would add nearly \$13,000 or more to the cost of a policy for people just under 65.”

“In fact, under the AHCA the cost of insurance gets radically more expensive for many, as help with deductibles and co-pays disappear just as tax credits are reduced and premiums vary widely.”

“The changes proposed in the AHCA would be a radical cut to Americans and our health care system and would result in unthinkable consequences for many.”

### **Mike Kreidler, Washington State Insurance Commissioner**

“Washington state fully implemented the Affordable Care Act... Our uninsured rate has dropped from 14 percent to 5.8 percent or 410,000 people. Our individual market is thriving – we have 13 insurers with 150 plans this year – more than we had before the ACA.”

“We did an economic analysis of the impact the proposed American Health Care Act (or Trumpcare) would have in our state and the findings are devastating. If this law passes, our uninsured rate will jump from 5.8 % to 15% or 1.1 million people – more than before the ACA... Young and older lower and middle income people in rural counties will be hit the hardest...I can tell you that I’m extremely worried.”

### **Panel Two: Patient and Provider Perspectives**

#### **Dr. Nitin Damle, President, American College of Physicians**

“The changes that the American Health Care Act would make to our healthcare system would adversely impact tens of millions of our patients, especially older, sicker, and poorer ones. I sincerely hope that Congress will slow down the drive to pass this deeply flawed bill, and instead work with ACP and others on bipartisan ways to improve current law without undermining essential coverage and consumer protections for millions of patients as this proposal does.”

“Without health insurance, people are less likely to have access to a regular physician, less likely to get cancer screening tests and vaccinations, less likely to keep up with their medications, more likely to get care in an emergency room, and more likely to wait to be treated until their disease has reached a more advanced and less treatable stage.”

“In my practice, I have many older, poorer and sicker patients who would be left behind if this became law.”

“Substance abuse including opioids and alcohol is a significant problem and Medicaid provides funding for treatment programs in our state. With the proposed cuts, it will be difficult to support these patients and programs.”

#### **Peter V. Berns, Chief Executive Officer, The Arc**

“The vast majority - 77 percent - of the supports and services that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities use to live in the community are funded through the Medicaid program. These

supports and services include help with meals, bathing and dressing, in-home skilled nursing, and communication, to name but a few. These supports and services are the linchpins to a life in the community, a life of meaning, and in many cases, they can be the difference between life and death”

“Unfortunately and frighteningly for these families and individuals, the new AHCA repeals critical parts of the ACA and replaces them with an approach to health care coverage that leaves millions behind.”

“Medicaid is already a lean program, states have already had to cut human services budgets. How can a state make up the difference in funding?”

“I’m thinking of one board member and his wife from The Arc of North Carolina. When staff of The Arc of NC explained what was happening here in Washington, what was at risk for Medicaid, I have been told that his comment brought the room to tears. He said “I’m old, and I’m going to die in the next five years. My life’s work has been to keep my son in the community in a meaningful way. To give him a life. Do you mean to tell me that I’m gonna die, he’s going to end up in an institution all alone, and what we built is for nothing?””

**Dr. Samuel Ross, Executive Vice President, Bon Secours Health System, Inc.**

“Ultimately, I expect most of those currently covered by the expansion to become uninsured again – a major step back for low-income and vulnerable people and around the country.”

“The unprecedented cuts to Medicaid through the rollback of enhanced federal matching for Medicaid expansion and the long-term cuts under per capita caps will have an overwhelming impact on Maryland’s finances and its Medicaid program. In Kentucky, a poorer state than Maryland, and one that saw a larger expansion, the cuts would likely be even more devastating.”

“In short, the AHCA guts Medicaid as we know it. The cuts are unparalleled and would have disastrous impacts on our hospitals and patients.”

“The bill would establish per capita caps for all Medicaid beneficiaries... States would have basically three options in dealing with these long-term cuts:

1. States could cut provider payment rates.
2. States could cut benefits.
3. Finally, states could cut people off the Medicaid rolls.”

**Dr. Sam Zager, Patient Advocate**

“As a family physician, at the non-profit Martin’s Point Healthcare in Portland, Maine, I care for patients from all walks of life. Many obtained health insurance through the Affordable Care Act. One of them was a polite grandmother in her late 40s who I’ll call Angela. She came for the first time to my office for a general exam, and we got to know each other a bit. She told me she often sews clothes for her 6-year old grand-son, who she babysits. But it wasn’t until two weeks later that Angela’s principal health concern became clear: she was addicted to opiates, and had shown up at our clinic that second time in withdrawal.”

“Yesterday, I saw a 50-something-year old man who I’ll call Mike. Mike became my patient about the same time as Angela, after he, too, gained insurance through the ACA marketplace. Like Angela, Mike is a hard worker. He told me he earns about \$30 thousand per year. I asked him how he thinks the AHCA might affect him. “I’m gonna get c-r-r-r-rushed!” he told me. Indeed, when I plugged in his numbers to the Kaiser Family Foundation website, it calculated that Mike stands to lose 48% of his tax credits under Speaker Ryan’s plan compared to the ACA.”

“In public debate in Congress, the actual people can be obscured by graphs and numbers. But ladies and gentlemen, every day in clinic, I am one-on-one with the real people, real Americans who could take steps closer to health, or suffer more with this Congress’s decision. I urge you and your colleagues to reject the American Health Care Act, and instead, strengthen the Affordable Care Act.”

**Marta Conner, Mother of a child with Rett Syndrome covered under Medicaid**

“Good afternoon, my name is Marta. This is my daughter Caroline and we live in Virginia. Caroline is 7 years old, but she can’t walk, talk, use her hands, sit unassisted, or even chew her food because she has Rett Syndrome – a neurological disorder that interferes with her ability to control her body. Caroline is essentially trapped inside her body.”

“Caring for Caroline is a full-time job and Medicaid provides skilled nursing care which allows us to raise Caroline in our home instead of a hospital or institution. This allows my husband and me to hold jobs and take care of other family needs. Medicaid also helps cover the cost of medical care and equipment not covered by our private insurance. These costs can add up to a few thousand dollars each month.”

“I certainly never imagined I would have a child who would rely so much on a government program like Medicaid. ...Medicaid provides skilled nursing care which allows us to raise [our daughter] Caroline in our home instead of a hospital or institution. This allows my husband and me to hold jobs and take care of other family needs. ...The House Republican Plan for Medicaid would put my daughter’s life at risk. And my family is terrified.”

“The Administration and Congress need to act in the interest of the country, and that includes every member of society – children, people with disabilities, the elderly, hard-working families who can’t make ends meet, and other vulnerable populations. Caroline’s life is in your hands. Please do the right thing. Protect Medicaid.”